



**A Pastors Guide to Returning to Public Worship
in the Diocese of Cleveland**

PREPARING YOUR CHURCH FOR THE RETURN OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

- All pews/seats should be marked for 6 feet of distance between worshippers with labels indicating social distancing.
- Hand Sanitizer should be available at each entrance of the Church and throughout the Church where appropriate.
- Prepare signage for the doors of the Church – e.g. “Please use front entrance,” or “Masks Required,” or “Please observe social distancing,” or “Please sanitize your hands before entering, when exiting, after contact with your face.” “Maximum of 50% of occupancy” of the church is permitted for the foreseeable future.
- Prepare for a “both-and” rather than “either-or” experience of liturgy. Livestreaming, recorded messages should continue in order to reach your parishioners until such time as it is completely safe to return to publish worship.
- All parishioners should be encouraged to take their temperatures prior to coming to Mass. Any parishioner with a temperature of 100.4° F or more should stay home. Anyone not feeling well should be encouraged to stay home.
- The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect for the Catholic faithful who reside in the Diocese of Cleveland and all other Catholics in the diocese until further notice.

BEFORE MASS

- The faithful are obliged to wear a mask (or other face covering) upon entering the church and during the celebration of Mass, except for the brief moment of receiving Holy Communion. Disposable masks should be made available at the doors of the church.
- All pews shall be wiped down with disinfectant after each Mass. This includes kneelers as well.
- All hymnals and missalettes are to be removed from the pews and stored for the duration of the pandemic. No other materials may be left in the pews. The faithful are

encouraged to bring their own missals or hymnals for use during the celebration of Mass. Music can be printed on a disposable worship aide (please be attentive to all musical licensing for this purpose).

- Restroom facilities, door handles, push plates and knobs are to be sanitized after each service.
- Holy water fonts are to remain empty until further notice.
- 6 feet distances should be marked with tape on the floor of the Church and staggered if there are two communion lines so that distance is kept between those who are receiving communion both ahead/behind and next to.
- Clergy and other ministers are to maintain six-foot distances and should not greet parishioners as they enter church.
- Nurseries and cry rooms should not be used unless they are able to be sanitized after each use.
- Children's Liturgy of the Word should only be offered virtually each week until further notice.

DURING MASS

- Entry and exit doors are to be adequately designated and monitored. If possible, you may designate one entry way in order to count the numbers of participants entering. Entry doors should be propped up or held open before Mass and exit doors should be propped or held open at the end of Mass to prevent people from touching the door handles, knobs or push plates.
- Staff, ushers or other volunteers should assist with directing people to pews specifically marked. Attendance will be limited to a maximum of 50% of the church's total capacity in order to assure compliance with social distancing requirements.
- Families may sit together but are to maintain six feet of distance between their family and other families or individuals throughout the celebration of Mass.
- Seating is to be arranged such that six feet of distance should be maintained between members of one household and another
- One or two pews should be left vacant in between congregants such that six feet of distance can be maintained in all directions
- The procession into church should be simple – preferably from the sacristy – not the front door of the church.
- No servers should be used to hold the Roman Missal. The presider will either utilize the altar for the presidential prayers or may set up a stand for the missal during the recitation of the prayers.
- It is recommended that servers, if utilized, will not vest in albs or cassocks. These items cannot be practically laundered between each use.
- Music ministers must maintain a minimum of 6 feet of distance and should have a designated microphone used only by that individual during the mass. The microphone should be sanitized after each Mass.

- Offertory processions are suspended. Collection baskets shall not be passed from one congregant to another, nor shall ushers take up the collection from the congregation. Stationary baskets are to be used for donations from the assembly and are to be monitored by the ushers until the donations are collected and handled according to proper protocols in place for handling the collection.
- The sign of peace is to be omitted for the time being.
- All concelebrating priests must have their own chalice and no other minister is to receive from the chalice until further notice. All liturgical items are to be properly cleansed and sanitized after each use.
- For the distribution of communion, ushers and other volunteers who are masked and gloved will ensure six-foot distancing in the communion line. Floor markings shall be placed six feet apart in the aisles in which the congregation approaches the sanctuary for communion to facilitate proper social distancing.
- Communion ministers must be masked, sanitize their hands immediately before and after distributing Communion and, when at all possible, to utilize a disinfectant wipe or purificator dipped in sanitizing solution (at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropyl alcohol) to sanitize their fingers when incidental contact is made with the communicant. Sanitizing stations should be located nearby the communion stations.
- Distribution of Holy Communion from the chalice is prohibited to the assembly and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion until further notice.
- Instructions for the distribution of communion should be clearly stated prior to the start of distribution.
- All Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should wear facemasks and gloves when possible.
- For those who are gluten intolerant, special arrangements are to be made with the pastor.
- For the distribution of Holy Communion, a single file for each communion minister is necessary to maintain social distancing. Multiple communion ministers may be used as long as one-way traffic patterns are observed.
- For the health and safety of all, reception of Holy Communion is strongly encouraged in the hand to avoid contact with individual's saliva. Presiders are encouraged to announce that all who wish to receive on the tongue should be last in the communion line to allow for proper sanitizing between each communicant.
- When approaching the Communion minister, the communicant is to pull their mask below the chin and present one hand resting on the palm of the other. After responding, "Amen," the communicant reverently places the Eucharist in his or her mouth and immediately replaces their mask.

AFTER MASS

- Family units should depart the church in an organized manner wearing masks and observing six feet of distance between other households. Ushers or clergy may need to direct this process.
- Ushers are not to hand out bulletins or other materials without gloves and distancing.
- Clergy and other ministers can acknowledge the faithful as they leave but only with social distancing and no physical contact such as a handshake or hug.
- Cleaning of the Vessels should utilize warm, soapy water. Presiders are to use their own chalices.
- There are to be no receptions or social gatherings (coffee and donuts) following Mass.
- Pews and other high trafficked areas of the church are to be wiped down before the next service, with the removal of trash and other items from the pews. All those who are cleaning or preparing the church should be masked and should wear gloves.

MISCELLANEOUS

The dispensation from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass remains in effect. Priests who have concerns about presiding at public worship due to age, underlying health reasons or are unable to implement these instructions should contact Fr. Don Oleksiak or Fr. Dan Schlegel.

REGARDING PARISH OFFICES

- Pastors are asked to use good judgment and ensure compliance with social distancing for parish office operations.
- Pastors are asked to use good judgment and may want to consider allowing those who are able, to continue to work remotely from home and develop a staggered plan over a period of a few weeks for the return of all employees to the Parish Office.
- Pastors are asked to develop a protocol for the regular cleaning and sanitizing of public surface areas in the parish office including but not limited to phones, desks, restrooms and public spaces.
- The parish office staff and visitors should adhere to the governor's directives regarding social distancing.

REGARDING PARISH FESTIVALS AND SUMMER EVENTS:

- Pastors are encouraged to delay or cancel parish festivals, carnivals, picnics or other large group events for the summer of 2020. The staff of the Diocese of Cleveland Foundation are ready to assist in creatively finding ways to recover lost revenue from these events. Please contact Patrick Grace at the diocese for further information.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. You are asked to use good judgment and implement plans that will provide for the safe and secure way to return to the public operation of parish life. These have been difficult times and your efforts to attend to the needs of your people, your creativity and generous service speaks volumes of your love for those entrusted to your care. Please feel free to contact anyone at the diocesan offices if you have any questions or concerns and/or need assistance with the publication of these guidelines.